

WEED INFORMATION SHEET

AFRICAN BOXTHORN

Noxious Weed



African Boxthorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*) Is introduced into Australia from South Africa as a hedge plant. It is now a serious weed in all states.

SPREAD – Seeds are readily spread by birds and animals eating the fruit, and so the bushes are often plentiful under trees. The extensive deep roots can produce new growth from broken pieces, so physical removal of bushes will not give complete control. Usually there will be some regrowth from the remaining root pieces.

DESCRIPTION – An erect perennial shrub that grows to a height of about 3 m and is characterised by its woody, thorny growth. Stout spines up to 16 cm long grow on the main stems. Small spines grow on numerous branchlets, which themselves end in a stout spine.

The branchlets bear clusters of fleshy, blue-green leaves 15 to 35 mm long, and small, tubular, five-petalled flowers that are white with pale blue markings.

The ripe fruit are small, 5 to 10 mm in diameter, orange-red, succulent and globular.

African boxthorn is drought resistant and in times of moisture stress can shed its leaves, making it look dead. The leaves will, however, quickly re-appear after rain.



WHY IS IT A WEED – The bushes form dense, impenetrable thickets that occupy valuable grazing land and harbour vermin such as rabbits. The berries are a host for fruit fly and other insects. African boxthorn, being an extremely hardy plant, is often hard to kill.

Photo's courtesy of Mr B.Worboys